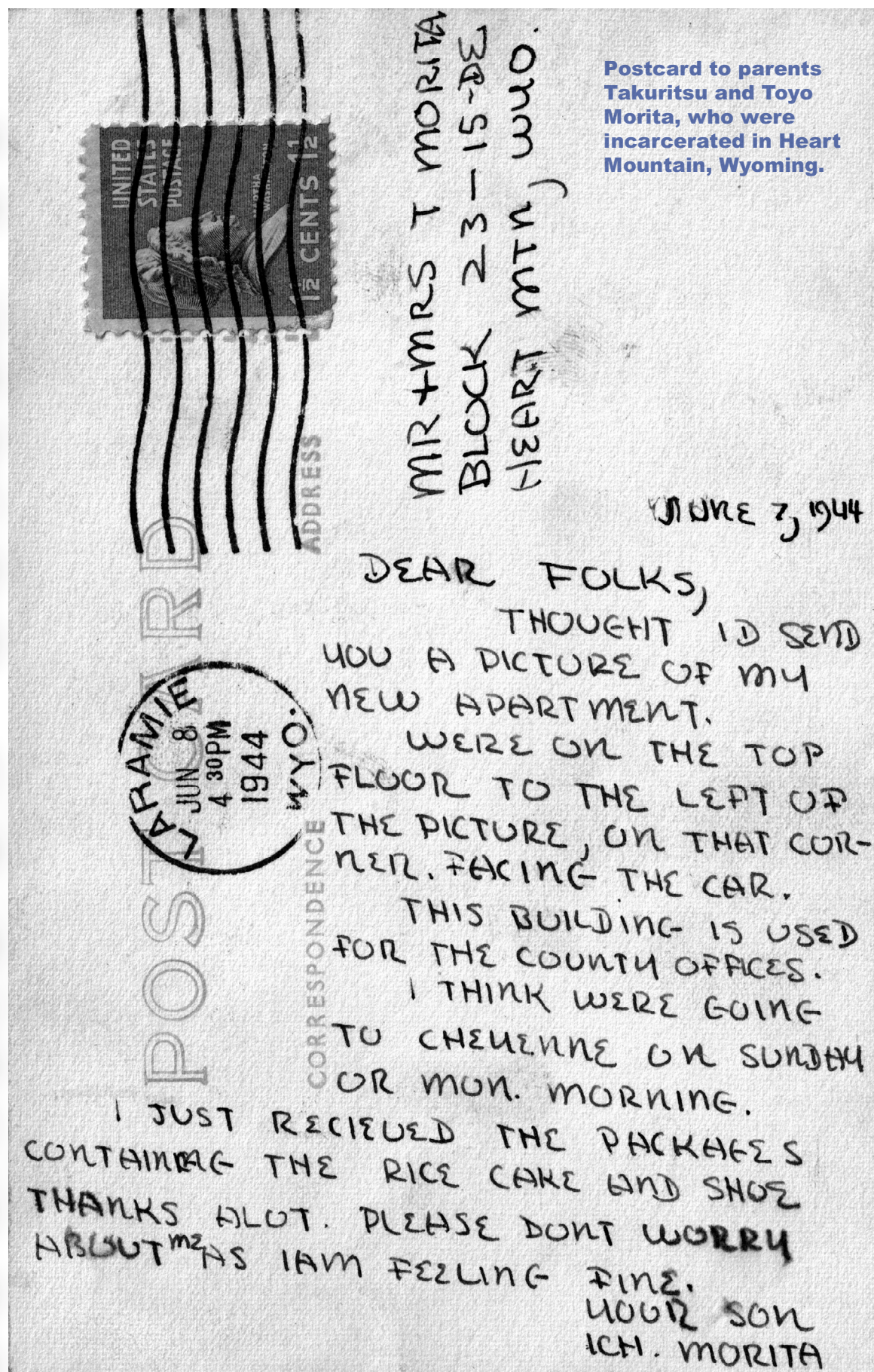




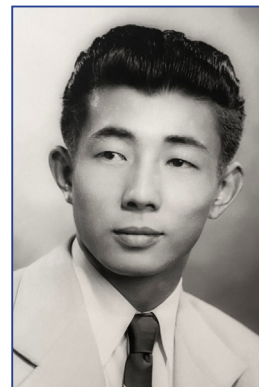
While awaiting trial for resisting the draft, Ichiro sent his parents this postcard, dated June 7, 1944, from the Albany County Courthouse in Laramie, Wy., a temporary facility he was held at before his trial in Cheyenne.

Ichiro MORITA

Former Alamedan is sentenced to prison for three years for "resisting the draft" during WWII

and the Heart Mountain

circa 1941



Postcards are usually the stuff of vacations and good times spent elsewhere. Not for **Ichiro Morita**, who was born in Alameda, CA., and lived there with his family until 1933, when they moved some 40 plus miles south to Mountain View.

Not long after World War II began, Ichiro was incarcerated in Heart Mountain, WY. He was one of the 120,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans forced to leave their homes behind, after President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which legalized the removal of all Japanese from the West Coast of the United States, without due process.

He registered for the military draft to fight for America during WWII, but purposely failed to show up for his pre-induction medical examination. His so-called "resistance to the draft" was his stance about his abrogated constitutional rights, and clarifying his status as a citizen. He was born in America, and was not a No-No boy.* He did not want to repatriate back to Japan, a country he knew little about. Draft resisters were considered cowards by their own kind...the Japanese in America.

continued page AFTER next

*to read more about the No-No Boys, [click here](#).

Ichiro Morita and the Heart Mountain 63 stand trial

11 Arrested for Draft Evasion; 63 Will Face Federal Charges

With the arrest here last Saturday of eleven draft age men charged with violating the Selective Service Act, the total number of draft delinquents at Heart Mountain mounted to 63.

The 52 residents who were arrested previously on similar charges were indicted last week by the federal grand jury at Cheyenne and at that time 11 "secret" indictments were made. The "secret" indictments were issued for persons who had not yet been issued warrants, it was reported.

According to an announcement from Cheyenne early this week Federal District Judge T. Blake Kennedy had agreed to a joint trial without jury for the 63 men on June 12th. The eleven arrested Saturday pleaded innocent before Judge Kennedy on Monday while 52 of them pleaded innocent on the previous Friday.

Those arrested Saturday by U. S. Marshalls were Masafumi Imai, Kiyoshi Ishikawa, Junichi Ighimaru, Masao Mayekawa, Ichiro Morita, Fred Katsumi

Shimane, Minoru Tamesa, Geo. Naoichi Tanabe, Torao Uyemura, George Susumu Uyeda and Ben Tsutomu Wakaye.

All 63 persons were arrested after failing to report for their pre-induction physical examinations..

Heart Mountain Sentinel May 20, 1944



Photo courtesy the Wyoming Eagle newspaper

Could you do what Ichiro did?

Ichiro was a typical American youth. He enjoyed building model airplanes and had thoughts of going into engineering. He was a member of the Boy Scouts for five years. Raised in a Buddhist household, he had friends, both Caucasian and Japanese.

“Ichiro had two French friends from across the street,” said Ichiro’s sister, Tetsuko. “They would bring comic books over. We used to look forward to those.”

He was also the oldest son of Takuritsu Morita. The family was hard on Ichiro, but also favored him. His mother, Toyo, would serve husband Takuritsu his meal first, and Ichiro would be next. When he argued with his brothers, Takuritsu blamed whomever was oldest involved, which was Ichiro, regardless of who was to blame. His notion of family responsibility and American citizenship would soon be tested.

“His rights were taken away, and what my parents were forced to go through, too, effected him,” Tetsuko said of her brother. “My father was taken away early, and my

mother was left with eight of us, and Ichiro was the oldest at the time. My mother didn’t speak much English.”

Ichiro’s daughter, Susan Morita, had similar thoughts. “I think the FBI taking his father away so early, in such a sudden, jarring manner, I think that really effected him. So all of sudden overnight, he became the person in charge, the one who had to make sure there was food on the table, to make sure that his family was taken care of.”

“And then to be sent to the camps and have no say in their daily lives,” Susan said. “They were forced to go there, they didn’t treat them as American citizens, and then to ask them to be a citizen and go to war when their families were in camps, I think that really effected him.”

Ichiro’s resistance to the draft was particularly unusual, given that all of his family members regarded him as a reserved person, before and after the war. In Ichiro’s high school yearbook, a friend described him as person that keeps his thoughts to himself. The woman he married (in 1958), Rose Nakano, concurred, as she recalled



Ichiro, at center, pals around with friends at Heart Mountain.

her first date with Ichiro.

“Very quiet!” Rose said. “Oh I remember our first date, we didn’t say one word. He wouldn’t say anything so I didn’t open my mouth, because once I open my mouth I knew he wouldn’t like anyone who talks so much. So from here to San Francisco we were quiet.”

They went to a movie, where they didn’t have to talk.

Ichiro Morita, the very quiet young man by virtually all accounts, decided to take a stand.

Could you do what Ichiro did?

Ichiro and the 62 other resisters were taken from Heart Mountain to stand trial in Cheyenne, WY. In the postcard (front page), he is being sarcastic when he writes about his new 'apartment' because he is really being kept in a holding cell (below), in an effort to ease his parents' fears.

The 63 were initially held in several locations in Wyoming. Ichiro's postcard (front page of this document and also below) shows one of those locations, the Albany County Courthouse, where he was held before the trial. The trial was held elsewhere, at the Laramie County jail in Cheyenne. Some Niseis were already there when Ichiro arrived.

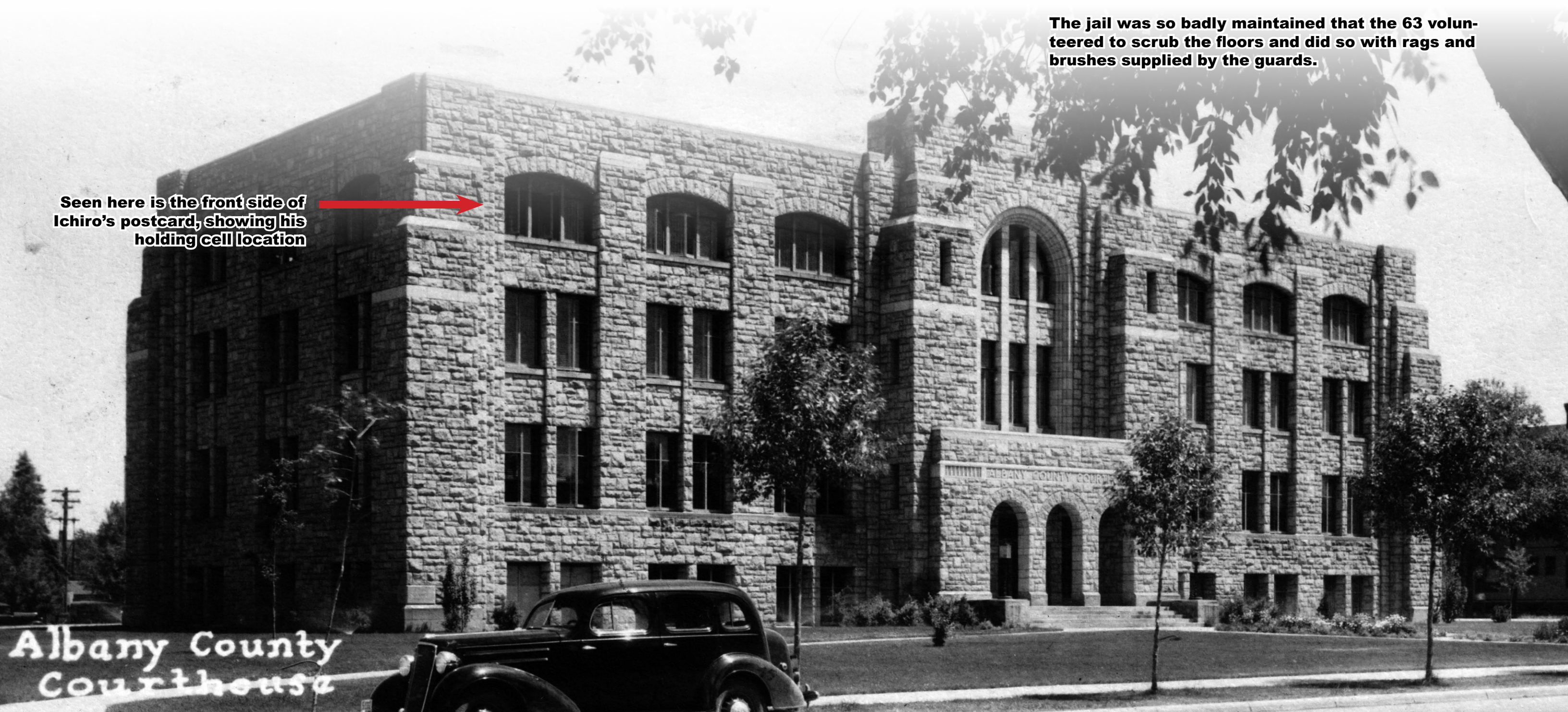
The Cheyenne jail was meant to hold about 30 total members, with each two person cell measuring a mere 6 by 5 feet. The cells were now quite overcrowded, with little space to walk between sleeping mats on the floor. The meals were poor and the men were confined to their cells 24 hours a day, with no exercise.

The jail was so badly maintained that the 63 volunteered to scrub the floors and did so with rags and brushes supplied by the guards.

Seen here is the front side of Ichiro's postcard, showing his holding cell location



**Albany County
Courthouse**



Ichiro's WWII draft registration card. His family moved from Alameda to Mountain View, CA in 1933.

FORM APPROVED
Budget Bureau No. 33-R012-42

REGISTRATION CARD (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER W 284C	1. NAME (Print) ICHIRO (First) (NONE) (Middle) MORITA (Last)	ORDER NUMBER W-13659C
2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print) 260 VIEW STREET, MOUNTAIN VIEW, SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA (Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State) [THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON LINE 2 ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]		
3. MAILING ADDRESS B-23-15-CYD HEART MTN RELOC. CTR., HEART MOUNTAIN, WYO. (Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same, insert word same)		
4. TELEPHONE NONE	5. AGE IN YEARS 18 YRS DATE OF BIRTH SEPTEMBER 11, 1925 (Exchange) (Number) (Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)	6. PLACE OF BIRTH ALAMEDA CALIFORNIA (Town or country) (State or country)
7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS MRS. TAKURITSU MORITA, B-23-15-CYD HEART MTN RELOC. CTR., HEART MTN., WYO.		
8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS STUDENT - UNEMPLOYED		
9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE. Ichiro Morita (Registrant's signature)		

DSS Form 1 (Rev. 11-16-42) 016-21630-4 (OVER)

The 18-year-old Morita was not opposed to the draft. Instead, he questioned the treatment of his family, and all Japanese Americans by their own government... the same government he was willing to fight for, as long as his constitutional rights as a citizen were reinstated. He believed in his country.

Fellow Heart Mountain draft resister Yosh Kuromiya, said that "...we, as a group, voted

to individually ignore the notices to report for preinduction exams in order to contest the issue in a court of law."

As the eldest son, Ichiro was quite worried about the state of his family. His father, Takuritsu, had been incarcerated in Bismarck, North Dakota, then Lordsburg & Santa Fe, New Mexico, and then Heart Mountain.

Ichiro's letter of concern about his family

July 24, 1943

COPY

Air Mail

Hon. F. de Amat, Consul
Spanish Consulate
58 Sutter St.
San Francisco, Calif.

Honorable Sir:

I am taking the liberty of writing to you to plead if you cannot please help me concerning my father, Takuritsu Morita, ISN 23-4-J 792-C1, formerly at Lordsburg, N. Mex. but now detained at Santa Fe, N. Mex.

I am 17 years old, the eldest of a family of 8 children. All are going to school except the youngest, aged 4. Ever since my father was taken away from home in February of last year, mother has been very worried and not very well. She has continued to lose weight, especially in the past few months. I thought she was bearing up pretty well under the very trying circumstances (she even went to night school to study English to try to keep her mind occupied), but lately she seems to be on the point of breaking down completely. She cries a great deal of the time and seems to spend more time brooding. We are getting worried about her and I, being the oldest, decided to write to you to plead if you cannot help us with advice or assistance in getting father released and returned home to us. I am sure that if he comes back, all our problems will be solved.

In order to earn a little money for the family, I am working during the summer on the garbage crew. I cannot work at any other time because I am still going to school. My two younger brothers, aged 14 and 16, are working on the road maintenance crew, but as they are still young, the work is not easy and they come home all tired out. As we have no other sources of income at other times, we are receiving public assistance grants but this is not sufficient to meet the needs of a family as large as ours.

None of our family have requested repatriation. Since our one wish is to keep our family intact, we have requested a transfer to the family internment camp at Crystal City, Texas, so that we could be together again in the event father could not be released.

But according to latest reports, there will be no further reunions of families for about six months. Because of this situation, could you please contact the Philadelphia office of the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service and inquire as to whether or not our family's name is included on the list of those who will be permitted to go as soon as facilities at that Camp are ready? If it is not, I would be very grateful if you can recommend our family's name. If I could only get a confirmation of this, then I think it will help lift my mother's spirits up considerably and make it easier for me and my brothers and sisters too.

Thank you very, very much!

Yours very sincerely,
Ichiro Morita

63 Evacuees Are Found Guilty

Casper Star Tribune • June 26, 1944

CHEYENNE, Wyo., June 24—(AP)—U. S. District Judge T. Blake Kennedy today sentenced 63 Japanese-Americans each to three years of confinement after finding them guilty of failure to report for draft pre-induction examinations.

Judge Kennedy ordered them turned over to the U. S. Attorney General for confinement in any federal institution he designates.

Co-defense counsel Clyde Watts told Judge Kennedy that the defendants expected to appeal his verdict.

CHEYENNE, Wyo., June 26—(AP)—U. S. District Judge T. Blake Kennedy today held 63 Japanese-American residents of a Wyoming relocation center guilty of failure to report for draft pre-induction examinations.

Judge Kennedy said it was the second time in 23 years he read an opinion from the bench. The first time was in the Teapot Dome oil case.

The 63 residents of the Heart Mountain center of northwestern Wyoming were tried without jury before Judge Kennedy between June 12 and 19, contending mainly that they considered citizenship rights clouded by relocation and that they did not wish to report for draft purposes until rights were cleared.

The defendants were charged with failure to comply with pre-induc-

tion orders sent to them by the Powell, Wyo., draft board. Powell is near Heart Mountain.

"As to the assertion that they did not desire to report until their citizenship had been clarified, this is without merit as to legal basis," Judge Kennedy said in his opinion.

"The courts have repeatedly asserted that the orders of the boards of selective service have the substance of congressional acts and must be obeyed.

"It is evident that when they asserted in the matter of the clarification of their citizenship was in fact accomplished by the effect of the order which they disobeyed.

"When x x x they were placed in 1-A and ordered to report for pre-induction physical examination, their pure American citizenship was established beyond question.

"Personally," Judge Kennedy said, "This court feels that the defendants have made a serious mistake in arriving at their conclusions which brought about these criminal prosecutions. If they are truly loyal American citizens they should, at least when they have become recognized as such, embrace the opportunity to discharge the duties of citizens by offering themselves in the cause of our national defense."

Judge Kennedy said exceptions to his verdict were reserved in behalf of the 63.

On June 12, 1944, at the federal district court in Cheyenne, WY, 63 draft resisters, including Ichiro Morita, stood trial in the *United States v. Shigeru Fujii, et al.*

"The stage was pretty well set on the very first day of our trial," said Yosh Kuromiya, "when Judge T. Blake Kennedy addressed the sixty-three of us as 'You Jap boys...'"

"We all looked at each other and didn't know whether to laugh or cry. We knew then that things would not go well for us."

About three weeks after Ichiro sent the postcard to his parents, Judge Kennedy found

the 63 guilty of failing to register for failure to report for draft pre-induction examinations and sentenced them to three years in federal prison.

Kennedy, an unrepentant racist, complained that his current trials of Mormons and the Japanese were infringing upon his golf schedule. He hated African Americans, all Jews, and now, the Japanese.

30 of the 63 were sent to Fort Leavenworth in Leavenworth, KS. Ichiro Morita and 32 others were sent to McNeil Island in Steilacoom, WA.

Most of the 30 were released early (time off for good behavior), on July 14, 1946.

In an office memorandum dated September 11, 1944, the Denver, Colorado SAC (Special Agent in Charge) wrote:
wrote the following about the 63 draft resisters:

As to the reason and reasons why they did not report as ordered by the Local Board at Powell, Wyoming, the defendants gave various and sundry explanations. However, they may be summarized briefly as follows: They claimed that the entire evacuation program was unfair; they cited forced losses of property for which they have received no remuneration from the United States Government;

they protested 4-C* classifications, which many of them did receive, stating that such classification designated an enemy alien; they alleged discrimination as to them because all of the branches of the Army and the Navy were forbidden to them; they expressed extreme

dislike for being detained in a camp surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by Military Police. Other alleged discriminatory acts on the part of the Government were cited which are too numerous to mention. With the exception of one individual, they all expressed loyalty to the United States and a willingness to serve in the armed forces when and if their citizenship status should be clarified.

This memorandum was addressed to the Director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover

*4-C means "aliens not acceptable to the armed forces, or any group of persons not acceptable."

The Special Agent in Charge is the highest ranking criminal investigator in a geographic region. The SAC is the equivalent to the Chief of Police. During the 1940s and 1950s, the FBI garnered headlines for its staunch efforts against Nazi and Communist espionage. During World War II, the Bureau took the lead in domestic counterintelligence, counterespionage, and counter sabotage investigations. The document above was edited to better fit this page.

McNeil Island Corrections Center

Ichiro was sent to first federal penitentiary in the territory of Washington (state) at McNeil Island, just a few miles from the town of Steilacoom.

Founded in 1875, inmates would perform a variety of jobs, from fish canning, land clearing to farming.

Ichiro would find conscientious objectors there, including Quakers and Jeho-

vah's Witnesses. There were liquor hijackers and bank robbers, too.

"Since we weren't hardened criminals, we were then sent out to the minimum security area, which was the farm," said McNeil inmate Takashi Hoshizaki. "There we lived in dormitories. No barbed wire. Doors were open and slept in a large dorm, and when we first arrived it was double-decker beds that we

shared. Two stories (in the building). And so the conditions were much, much better than the county jails and much better than the, what we called the (big) house, the main penitentiary."

Notables incarcerated there at various times included "Birdman of Alcatraz" Robert Stroud, mass murderer Charles Manson, and fellow WWII draft resister Gordon Hirabayashi.



The Institution as it appeared in 1937.

Photo courtesy Department of Corrections, McNeil Island Corrections Center Photograph Collection, 1855-2010, Digital Archives, <https://digitalarchives.wa.gov/Record/View/5A98E378BD93794AD4C1C5C09B84CAEB>

Last of Convicted Evacuees Will Go To McNeil Island

CHEYENNE, Wyo., July 8.—(P)—Thirty Japanese-Americans convicted on charges of failing to report for selective service examinations will leave the Laramie county jail today en route to the McNeil Island, Wash., federal prison, Sheriff N. E. Tuck said.

They are the last of 63 convicted Heart Mountain relocation center residents to be removed to prisons. All were sentenced to three years each by U. S. District Judge T. Blake Kennedy.

Three left yesterday for the McNeil Island prison in the custody of U. S. Marshal A. A. Sanders, and 30 others were taken to the Leavenworth federal prison in Kansas last Monday.

“First we were evacuated without due process of law and held without trial, and now they want to draft us,” said draft resister Dave Kawamoto, in a 1993 interview with Densho.

“I don’t think that was right. I think they should have clarified our (citizenship) status before even attempting to draft us. Well, that all the more soured me on enlisting voluntarily into the segregated service.” **

“You couldn’t imagine what it must have taken,” said draft resister Kats Kunitsugu, in a 1995 interview with Densho.

“What strength of soul or maybe desperation, but I still think there was a strength of heart there that saw straight into the heart of the matter and said, well, if I have but one life to live I’m going to make a decision that is right, and this is my decision.”

“There is a good chance of beating this charge anyway, since we are not guilty of such a thing in the first place,” wrote draft resister Minoru Tamesa, in a letter to his father, Uhachi.

“The judge or jury could not truthfully decide otherwise when the Tule Lake* and Poston cases were

both acquitted. Of course at the hearing I will plead not guilty. Do not worry about anything and tell my friends not to worry either. Everything will come out all right in the end. If there is any justice they can’t find me guilty.”

• Minoru Tamesa’s misplaced faith in the judicial system was based on California Federal Judge Louis Goodman’s ruling, where he dismissed charges against 23 resisters from Tule Lake. Goodman called the decision to prosecute the resisters a shock to his own conscience, and a “violation of due process.” Goodman’s ruling favoring draft resisters would be in the minority of similar court cases.

**** That “segregated service” would be the US Army 442nd Regimental Combat Team. The 442 would become a highly decorated and lauded military force during WWII.**



If we could ask him, it's likely that **Ichiro Morita** would have no regrets with his decision and would make the same choice today. So just who was Ichiro Morita? Son of immigrants? American citizen? Draft resister? Malcontent? Hero?

Some Niseis fought for freedom with the military. Ichiro did not do that, but he was still a casualty of the second world war. He suffered at the hands of an insidious enemy that still pervades America, called racism.

Ichiro Morita died on April 4, 2022. He was 96 and did not talk about his prison experience with his family. Just before Christmas 1947, President Harry S. Truman pardoned all draft resisters, including the

Niseis. Their right to vote was restored. On August 24, 1958, Ichiro married Rose Nakano. They opened Morita's Picture Framing in Campbell, CA., in 1973. As of 2023, it is still in business.

THANKS TO: Lynn Dunbar, Susan Morita, Takako Morita Watanabe, Tetsuko Morita Suzuki, Rose Nakano Morita and the Takuritsu Morita family for family information, access to photos and documents.

Geoff Dobson: Wyoming historian • <http://www.wyomingtalesandtrails.com/>

Linda Kiisk • Architect • Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office • <https://wyoshpo.wyo.gov/>

Densho: video interviews and general information

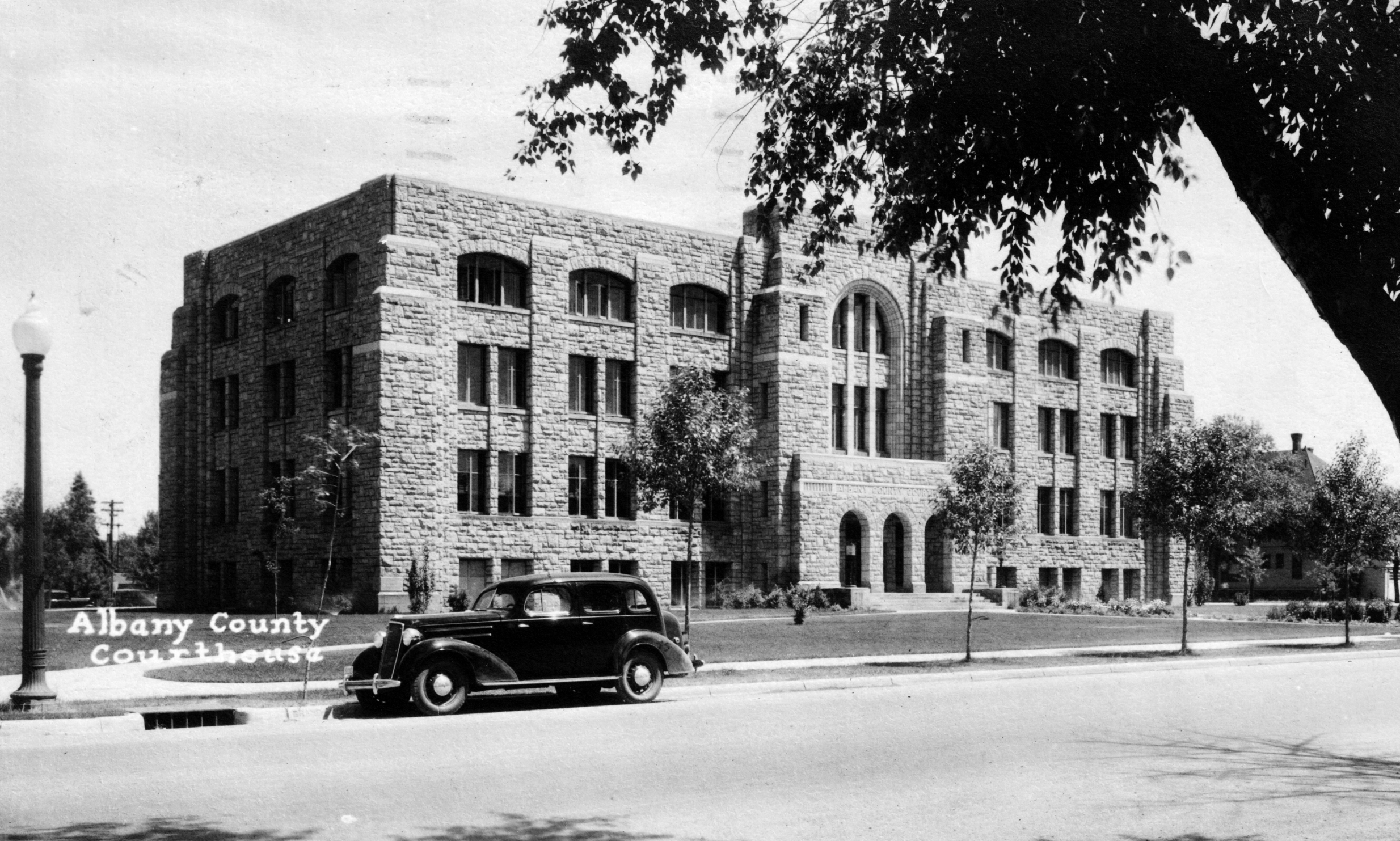
Books: *Free to Die for their Country*, by Eric Muller / *A Matter of Conscience*, edited by Mike Mackay / *Soldiers of Conscience* by Shirley Castelnovo

McNeil Island Historical Society: <http://www.mcneilisland.net/>

Photo this page: The flag hanging inside the U.S.S. Hornet aircraft carrier museum, which is permanently docked at Alameda island, where Ichiro was born. During WWII, the Hornet carried Doolittle's Raiders, the first American aircraft to bomb Japan.



ALAMEDA
Japanese
American
HISTORY PROJECT



Ichiro Morita's WWII Postcard from Laramie, WY

While awaiting trial for purposely failing to appear for his pre-induction (draft) medical examination, Ichiro Morita sent his parents this postcard, dated June 7, 1944, from the Albany County Courthouse in Laramie, Wy., a temporary facility he was held at before his trial in Cheyenne. He was one of the 63 Nisei who 'resisted the draft' from Heart Mountain incarceration camp.

ALAMEDA
Japanese
American
 HISTORY PROJECT

The 63 were initially held in several locations in Wyoming. Ichiro's postcard shows one of those locations (above), the Albany County Courthouse, where he was held before the trial. The trial was held elsewhere, at the Laramie County jail in Cheyenne.

He was born in Alameda, CA but his parents, Takuritsu and Toyo moved the family to Mountain View, CA in 1933.

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He is being sarcastic when he writes about his new 'apartment' because he is really being kept in a holding cell, in an effort to ease his parents' fears.

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ALAMEDA
Japanese
American
HISTORY PROJECT



ADDRESS

MIR + MRS T MORITA
BLOCK 23-15-DE
HEART Mtn, WYO.

JUNE 7, 1944

DEAR FOLKS,
THOUGHT I'D SEND
YOU A PICTURE OF MY
NEW APARTMENT.
WE WERE ON THE TOP
FLOOR TO THE LEFT OF
THE PICTURE, ON THAT COR-
NER, FACING THE CAR.
THIS BUILDING IS USED
FOR THE COUNTY OFFICES.
I THINK WE WERE GOING
TO CHEYENNE ON SUNDAY
OR MON. MORNING.

I JUST RECEIVED THE PACKAGES
CONTAINING THE RICE CAKE AND SHOE
THANKS ALOT. PLEASE DON'T WORRY
ABOUT ME AS I AM FEELING FINE.
YOUR SON
ICH. MORITA



Ichiro Morita of Mountain View, CA. He was born in Alameda, CA and lived there until 1933. This 1947 photo was likely taken shortly after he was released from McNeil Island Federal Prison in Steilacoom, WA. Most of the 30 Niseis at McNeil were released before their three-year sentence was over with for good behavior, on July 14, 1946.

He was among the 63 Nisei draft resisters from Heart Mountain from incarceration camp convicted of failing to report for their draft pre-induction examination.